

9

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO GET BETTER CARE

1

Talk with your doctor or nurse.

Talk with your doctor or nurse about what matters to you. Share your beliefs and preferences for care. Ask questions. Make a list of all the questions you want to ask. Bring the list to each appointment and write down the answers. If you don't understand, ask again until you do.

2

Don't go it alone.

Take a friend or family member along to medical appointments. They can listen, take notes and help you remember what was said.

3

Learn about the best treatments for your condition.

A lot of research has been done on what care works best for chronic conditions like asthma, diabetes and heart disease. For many conditions, clear standards for treatment exist. Become familiar with what works for your condition. Learning more helps you understand what your doctor might look for or recommend. It will help you follow recommendations, and will help you know what questions you want to ask during your appointment.

4

Find and use quality information to make health care decisions.

Use information in publicly available reports to make decisions about doctors and hospitals. Look for a doctor who appears to provide the care you want for you and your family, and who is willing to work with you to make decisions. Look for a hospital that is highly rated by consumer groups or other organizations and has lots of experience treating your condition.

5

Have one doctor or nurse coordinate your care.

To make sure you get the right amount of the right kind of care, you need help coordinating your care. With one doctor or nurse who knows about all of the care you're getting, you're more likely to get the care you need and not get care that might be harmful. For example, someone who knows about all your care might prevent you from getting prescriptions from different doctors for drugs that have harmful interactions. Or it might prevent you from repeating a test.

6

Create a medication list.

List all medications and supplements you currently take, including over-the-counter medicines, prescriptions, vitamins and herbal remedies. Bring your medication list with you to every doctor appointment.

7

Ask your doctor or nurse if they use health information technology.

Electronic medical records help track and share your medical information with your other health care providers. Tracking information electronically, rather than on paper, means that the information your doctors need is available all the time, no matter where you are. This can reduce errors and unnecessary tests.

8

Know the difference between more care and better care.

Studies have shown that getting more care doesn't mean that you are getting better care. Sometimes, getting more care can actually do harm or expose you to unnecessary risks. If you think you may be getting more care than you need, you can protect yourself by asking: "How will this help me? What will we find out from this test?"

9

Take responsibility for your health care.

Find and review reports of physician and hospital performance. Work as a partner with your doctor or nurse to ensure you're getting the best care. Talk with your doctor or nurse about your health care goals and follow through on their recommendations.